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Testimony in Opposition to Governor's
March 1, 2010 Deficit Mitigation Plan

Submitted by
Henry Lord, Board Chair
The Trust for Public Land, CT Office
March 11, 2010

To: The Committee on Appropriations

As Board Chair of the Connecticut office of The Trust for Public Land for the last four years, and as a board member and supporter for many previous ones, I am writing to strongly oppose the elimination or "sweeping" of The Community Investment Act of the \$5 million currently generated by this invaluable program, first passed in 2005 as PA 228.

As state funds for open space acquisition have diminished over the past several years, monies generated by recording fees that are sanctioned by this legislation have proved invaluable. Over the past five years the CT office of The Trust for Public Land has successfully completed approximately 15 open space preservation projects with the help of funding from the Community Investment Act which, as mentioned, has helped to maintain funding levels dispersed by the DEP for its matching grants program.

The continued success of TPL's mission of "land for people" goes beyond the preservation of open space. At the national level, TPL's work moves from playgrounds and parks to farmland, tribal lands, historic sites, open space and wilderness and wild lands. By definition, TPL's mission is similar to most of those supported by the CIA fund which are open space preservation, farmland preservation and historic preservation.

If the Community Investment Act funds were eliminated, it would severely limit the ability of The Trust for Public Land to work with towns and local land trusts in preserving cherished landscapes that have critical environmental, aesthetic and historic assets for both residents and visitors to Connecticut. It would be a perfect example of the "penny wise and pound foolish" adage.

I respectfully contend that trying to balance the State's budget deficit by taking money generated by the CIA fund makes no sense structurally. The Community Investment Act is not part of the General Fund-- it is solely funded by the above mentioned dedicated funding source. It helps to promote programs that already benefit Connecticut financially, including paying the salaries of three key employees within the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program. Furthermore, the historically significant buildings that are renovated by these funds attract tourists to our state, as do our farms and beautiful rural areas and scenic vistas.

In conclusion, the current budget dilemma confronts the State with some painfully difficult decisions. I respectfully contend that terminating the money generated by The Community Investment Act is short-sighted and would only make a bad situation worse. I urge the commission to preserve these important funds which are so critical to Connecticut's economy.

